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ABSTRACT

Literature on college curriculum has been declining since the early 1990s, representing under 5 percent of the literature added to the ERIC database in 1996. One reason seems to be the emphasis on instruction; another is that information on curricular movements are often addressed in the literature on instructional change. Trends in 1996 in the literature on curriculum include themes of diversity, democracy or citizenship, environmentalism, and international studies. A major trend in the literature is the addition of interdisciplinary curricula, although it tends to be subsumed under the theme of instructional change. Diversity is described in the literature most often as an issue for practitioners; one of the most comprehensive resources documents the impact of multiculturalism on higher education during the 1980s and 1990s. However, research is needed to document the impact of multicultural curricula on student outcomes. Another important theme added to the literature in 1996 is curricula focused on the development of civic responsibility; and environmental education, which virtually disappeared in the 1980s and early 1990s, is once again in the literature. The number of documents on international education is small if measured by the importance of the issue as manifested by mission statements, presidential speeches, and the press. (Contains 12 references.) (JM)

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Higher Education Trends (1997-1999) Curriculum

by Adrianna J Kezar

Literature on the college curriculum has been declining since the early 1990s. In 1996, it represented under 5% percent of the literature added to ERIC's database. Seldom does one hear the heated debate about general education, coherence, specialization, or moral education that characterized the 1980s. One reason for the declining emphasis on curriculum might be the attention to instruction. Another explanation might be that several of the curricular movements are addressed through the instructional changes. For example, such instructional transformations as service learning incorporate concerns about diversity and moral development. Debates about an interdisciplinary curriculum have been transformed into discussions about learning communities that link or cluster classes around an interdisciplinary theme. These innovations are all related to the curriculum. An emerging trend, however, is a shift from content to delivery systems. Moreover, the literature has moved from rhetoric about modifications in curricula to research on the impact of changes. One resource for understanding current trends is the 700-page *Handbook of Undergraduate Curriculum*, produced by AACU in 1996.

Trends in the literature on curriculum in 1996 include diversity, democracy or citizenship, environmentalism, and international studies. The addition of interdisciplinary curricula is a major trend in the literature, but it tends to be discussed as a change in instruction, as many of the most innovative interdisciplinary programs involve transformation at the school or college level and a major restructuring of course content (see also "Instruction" for a more detailed description).

Diversity is described most often as an issue for practitioners. One of the most comprehensive resources documents the impact of multiculturalism on higher education during the 1980s and 1990s; it includes research on learning outcomes as well as descriptions of programs (Morris and Parker). Another article discusses the effort to diversify a teacher education program at West Chester University in Pennsylvania that began with a faculty seminar on racial, class, and gender identity and culminated in the redesign of courses (Finkel and Bollin). Fields that historically have been more sensitive to gender and race or ethnicity, such as social work, tend to have developed more literature on integrating diversity into their curricula (Norman and Wheeler). But research still needs to be conducted on the impact of multicultural curricula on student outcomes to illustrate the merits of the transformation.

Curricular designs focused on the development of civic responsibility are important in the literature added to the database in 1996. Douglas Dixon's "Teaching Democracy as a 'Practical' Science: Reorganizing the Curriculum at Institutions of Higher Education for Active Citizenship" describes how the inclusion of a project-based curriculum in postsecondary political science classes could result in more effective and higher-quality political participation among these young citizens. One whole issue of the journal *Metropolitan Universities* is devoted to the topic of service learning, exploring, for example, ways in which a college or university can support and enhance service learning

pedagogy, including practical strategies for curricular design, faculty development, and administrative support. Its illustrations are drawn from Loyola College of Maryland, whose program has five categories of initiatives: a service leadership track, a service learning colloquium, a departmental associates program, course administration support, and faculty development (Leder and McGuinness; Zlotkowski).

A major theme in the 1970s that virtually disappeared in the 1980s and early 1990s, environmental education, has again become a part of academic curricular discussions. A study by Grace Hess-Quimbita and Michael Pavel investigates factors affecting the development of positive attitudes toward environmental issues among college students, focusing on the direct and indirect effects of students' backgrounds, institutional characteristics, and college experiences and outcomes. Another study examines medical schools and presents the results of a survey asking whether they offer course work in environmental medicine (Schenk et al.).

Although international education is also represented in the literature on curricular development, the number of documents is surprisingly small, given the importance of the issue as touted by mission statements, presidential speeches, and the popular press. Colleges often claim that an understanding of international issues through cross-cultural studies, intercultural education, study abroad, foreign languages, or multicultural education is critical to success in the 21st century. Many authors are struggling to define what an international education should be and how the various strategies for achieving this competence compare (Lawson and Tubbs). Other studies explore the differential impact of international education curricula on various types of students; Teara Archwamety, for example, explores the perception of impact of an international education program on Japanese and on American students.

The declining importance of curricular content should be studied in conjunction with issues of shrinking resources. If the actual curriculum is less important than the delivery system, perhaps certain programs can be eliminated or downsized in this time of shrinking resources (Lock). Studies that examine how states might coordinate curricula or schools that share or combine programs, such as at the University of Oregon, need to be analyzed.

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